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Report Name: Update on Regulatory Challenges and Opportunities for
US Products in Burma

Country: Burma - Union of

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Situation

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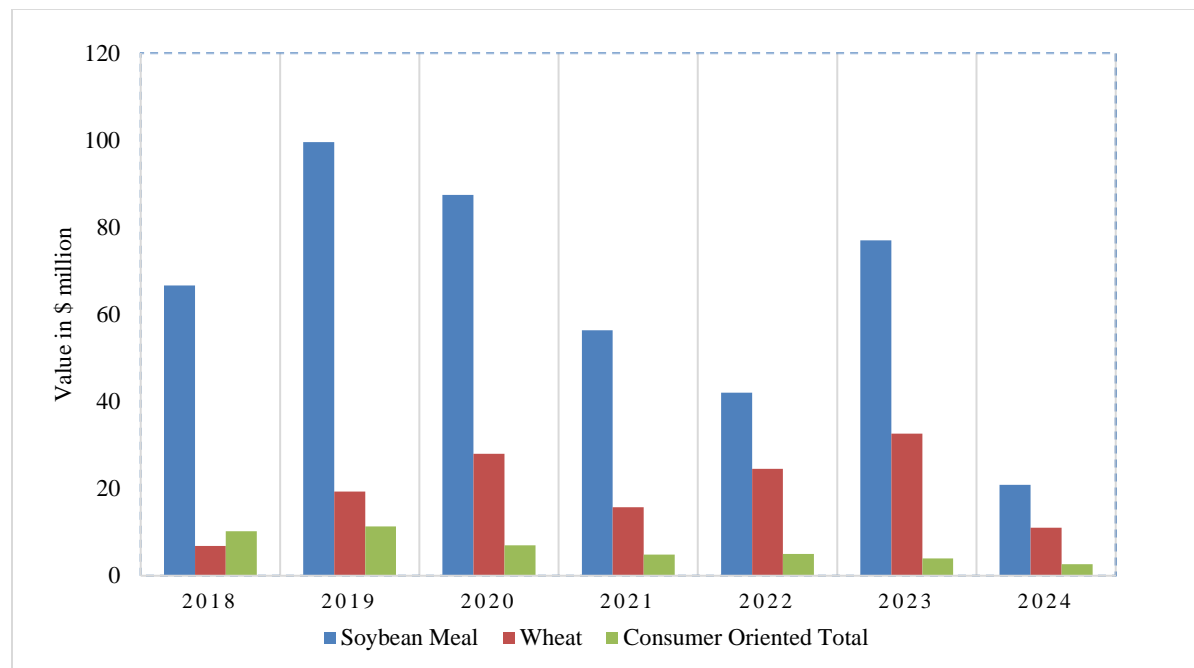
Report Highlights:

This report summarizes regulatory barriers faced by Burmese importers, sector-specific trade flows for U.S. products to Burma, and future outlook for U.S. exports to the market.

Overview

U.S. agricultural exports to Burma (also known as Myanmar) have historically included soybean meal, wheat, and various consumer-oriented goods. Following the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the February 2021 military coup, U.S. agricultural exports to Burma declined before reversing course in 2023. From 2022 through 2024, the military regime implemented several trade policy changes and regulatory adjustments that created substantial barriers to both import and export activities. As a result of these compounding factors, U.S. agricultural exports declined significantly in 2024 and are even lower in 2025 year-to-date. Industry sources, however, still value U.S. agricultural commodities and remain actively interested in U.S. consumer-oriented, intermediate, and bulk commodities.

Figure 1. Burma: Value of Major U.S. Agricultural Export Categories (2018-2024)



Source: [Global Agricultural Trade System \(GATS\)](#)

Regulatory and Procedural Challenges

1. Complicated and Inconsistent Procedures

Burmese importers face complex and frequently [shifting trade regulations](#). One major challenge is the lack of transparency regarding which product categories are currently ineligible for import licenses. The Ministry of Commerce (MOC) does not publicly ban food items but simultaneously refrains from issuing import licenses for them, leaving importers uncertain and at risk of shipment rejection.

2. Difficulty Obtaining Import Licenses

Import licenses (IL) are especially difficult to obtain for soybean meal and consumer-oriented products, such as wine and processed food items. The IL approval process may take between three to five months for sea channels while overland border trade IL applications are generally processed faster (approximately one month). The MOC has suspended licenses for “ready-to-eat” foods and reportedly is considering limiting imports to only raw material for domestic food or feed manufacturers. However, MOC has not clearly specified which food items are classified as 'ready-to-eat' under current import license regulations.

3. Import Value Limitations

The MOC enforces daily import value caps, which are not officially published:

- **Overland Border Trade:** Maximum of \$50,000 per company per day
- **Seaborne Trade:** Maximum of \$100,000 per company per day

Bulk commodities, such as wheat, are generally exempt from these restrictions. Wheat importers shared that the Ministry of Commerce allows a maximum value of \$300,000 per import license for wheat, although no official announcement has been made.

Export Credit Requirement

The Department of Trade, under the MOC considers IL approval based on export earnings of the applying importer. To apply for an IL, importers must: 1) submit proof of export earnings (e.g., export declarations, remittance records, etc.), and 2) match the amount of foreign currency required for the import¹ to the export earnings. The MOC reviews submitted documents and may issue the license only if the criteria are fully met.

4. Soymeal Import Quota

For Burmese fiscal year (FY) 2024/25 (April–March), the MOC has set a quota of 300,000 metric tons (MT) for soymeal imports. However, the ministry has not yet issued the corresponding licenses, citing a preference to support the use of domestically produced oil cakes by local livestock farms. From April 2024 to March 2025, Myanmar imported 124,893 MT of soybean meal, which was much lower than the approved import quota. As of the time of this report, industry sources confirmed that MOC just issued the monthly quota for February 2025 (approximately 25,000 MT), and importers can start to apply for import licenses to fill this quota. The Myanmar Livestock Federation allocates import volumes among importers based on the monthly quota.

¹ Recently, an industry source shared that export credit will not be required for the importation of fertilizer and pesticides in August, but there has been no official announcement as of July 30.

5. Wheat

According to major importers, it typically takes about three to five months to obtain an import license for wheat. The two wheat-importing companies are joint ventures with foreign partners, engage in imports and exports, and have bank accounts abroad. As a result, the requirement to use export earnings for payments for imports has had a minimal impact on their operations. They also seem to have adapted well to the recent policy changes and have been able to receive import licenses. Despite the delays, they continue to manage regular monthly wheat shipments. Post estimates Burma's wheat imports at 450,000 metric tons between July 2024 and June 2025.

6. Frozen Meat

High-quality frozen meats (e.g., beef and pork) are classified as non-essential goods, which makes obtaining an IL extremely difficult. Another challenge is that importers must apply to the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department (LBVD) for an import recommendation (IR) before applying for an IL from the MOC. The IR is valid for only three months, while shipments from the United States or Australia typically take 3–4 months to arrive. Thus, the IR often expires before the products arrive in Burma.

Financial Barriers

- **Payment Terms**

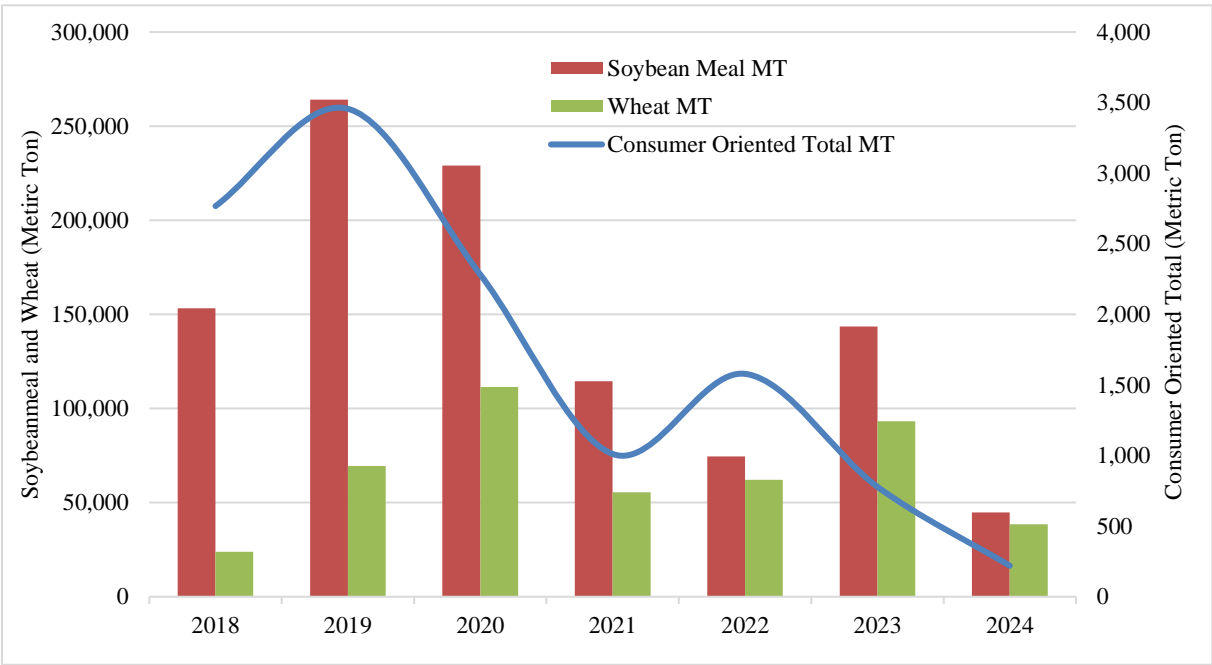
The MOC enforces a Cost, Insurance, and Freight, (CIF)-based remittance system, allowing 100 percent telegraphic transfer (T/T) only *after* shipment arrival and customs clearance. This severely restricts small and medium-sized importers, who are unable to negotiate favorable terms with foreign suppliers demanding partial or full pre-shipment payments. Consequently, some importers seek out alternative and flexible payment systems and terms. Only importers with their own bank accounts in Singapore or Thailand can navigate payments smoothly by themselves.

Market Impact

Due to the challenges of obtaining an IL from the MOC, many consumer-oriented products are imported into Burma indirectly through third countries. As a result, some importers and distributors are reluctant to conduct public sales promotions or other marketing efforts and instead choose to sell to trusted customers.

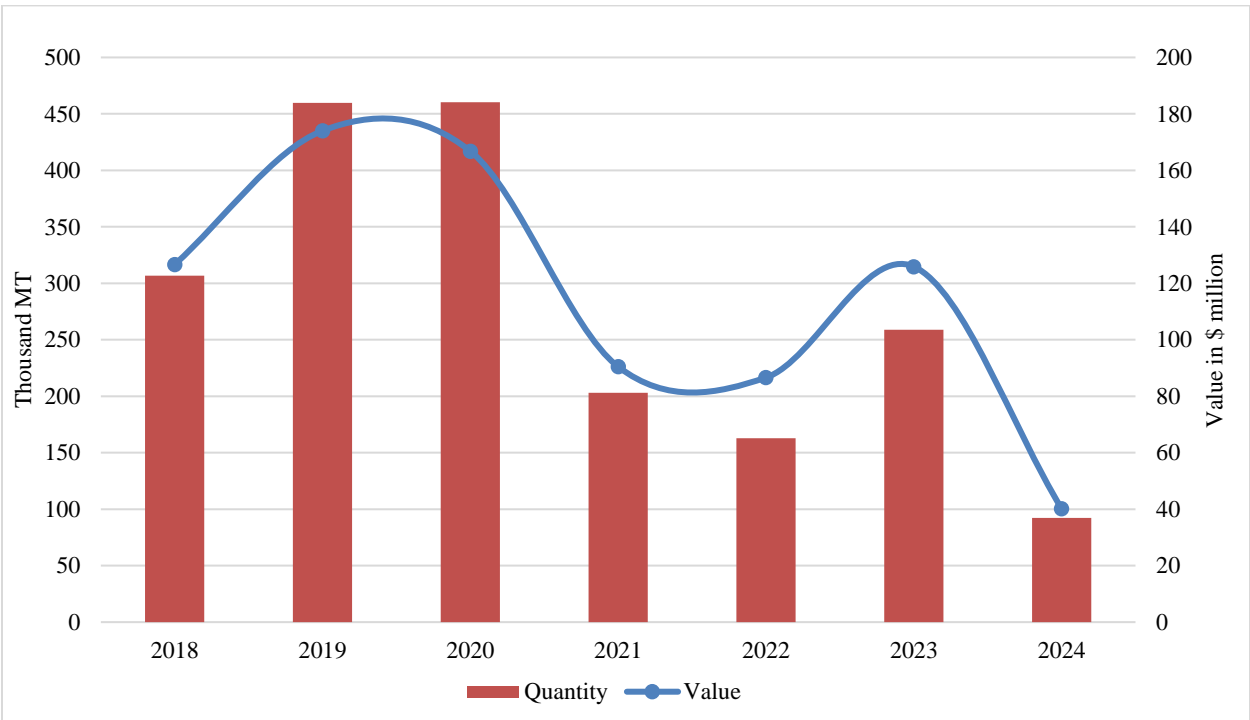
Since 2022, many importers have been looking for ways to continue their business operations in Burma, while also starting new ventures in neighboring countries. Some Burmese food companies have expanded into Thailand by opening Myanmar food stores and exporting Burmese products to Thailand to meet the growing demand from the Burmese diaspora.

Figure 2. Burma: Volume of Major U.S. Agricultural Exports (Metric Ton)



Source: [Global Agricultural Trade System \(GATS\)](#)

Figure 3. Burma: Comparison by Volume and Value of Total U.S. Agricultural Exports



Source: [Global Agricultural Trade System \(GATS\)](#)

Market Potential for U.S. Agricultural Products

In May 2025, a major importer stated that the regime was considering issuing more import licenses for sea routes. The regime typically reviews the trade balance at the end of the fiscal year and decides to suspend or issue import licenses. Between April 2024 and March 2025, Burma's total exports of all goods were \$14.8 billion, and imports were \$12.5 billion for a recorded trade surplus of \$2.3 billion. Based on Burma's trade surplus, industry sources expect that the regime will consider resuming the issuance of import licenses. This is creating renewed interest among importers, who are eager to take advantage of the opportunity. Although a new and higher exchange rate is expected to apply to both sea freight and border trade channels, importers remain optimistic and are preparing for the anticipated policy changes. They are actively planning their shipments for products that are currently out of stock in the market, such as certain supplemental nutritional drinks and baby formula.

Dairy products, such as cheese, cream cheese, whipping cream, nonfat dry milk, and condensed milk, are in high demand due to the absence of local production. One importer recently obtained an import license for cheese and received their first sea shipment of 20 containers (20-foot in size each) in April 2025. A second shipment is expected to arrive in August.

There is a strong potential for U.S. agricultural exports to Burma. Historical data show that from 2018 to 2020, before the military coup, U.S. agricultural exports to Burma reached their highest levels, exceeding \$174 million in value in 2019 (Figure 3). These figures sharply declined post-2020, coinciding with the political instability and tightened import controls. The rebound of U.S. exports to Burma to \$125.9 million in 2023 suggests a resilient demand for U.S. agricultural products when import conditions allow. If restrictions are removed and economic confidence is restored, Burma's growing population and evolving consumption patterns could again support robust demand for quality U.S. commodities, especially bulk and consumer-oriented goods. A re-establishment of a stable trade environment would also benefit U.S. exporters by restoring market access and encouraging long-term partnerships with Burma's importers and processors.

Attachments:

No Attachments.